

In the Claims:

1. (currently amended) A pallet assembly comprising a metal base member and a removable plastic deck member joined to said metal base member, and integral mating interlocking means which in combination join said plastic deck member to said metal base member;

wherein said metal base member and said plastic deck member each comprise an outer perimeter, wherein said mating interlocking means are positioned within said outer perimeters of said metal base member and said plastic deck member;

wherein said metal base member further comprises a generally flat upper surface and wherein said mating interlocking means comprises apertures disposed in said upper surface of said metal base member and depending lug members on said plastic deck member which extend through said apertures in said metal base member upper surface; and

wherein said depending lug members each comprise at least one detent member, wherein the width of said depending lug members in a direction containing said at least one detent member is greater than the corresponding width of said apertures in said upper surface of said metal base member in such direction.

2. (canceled)

3. (canceled)

4. (canceled)

5. (currently amended) The pallet assembly of claim 1 [[4]], wherein said metal base member upper surface comprises a plurality of spaced structural members.

6. (original) The pallet assembly of claim 5, wherein said spaced structural members comprise rods joined to define a grid.

7. (original) The pallet assembly of claim 6, wherein said spaced structural members further comprise flat bars, wherein said rods are disposed parallel to each other and said flat bars are disposed parallel to each other, with said rods disposed perpendicularly to said flat bars.

8. (canceled)

9. (currently amended) The pallet assembly of claim 1 [[4]], wherein said metal base member comprises at least four depending leg members located directly below at least four of said apertures in said upper surface of said metal base member, and wherein said depending lug members corresponding to said at least four of said apertures each comprise an open interior and a leg receiving opening, such that the pallet assembly is nestable when vertically stacked with another such pallet assembly.

10. (currently amended) The pallet assembly of claim 7, wherein said flat bars adjacent said apertures are provided with slots to receive said at least one detent member ~~shoulders~~ of said depending lug ~~detent~~ members.

11. (currently amended) The pallet assembly of claim 1 [[4]], wherein said plastic deck member comprises a generally flat load receiving surface.

12. (currently amended) The pallet assembly of claim 1 [[4]], wherein said plastic deck member comprises a product receiving cavity.

13. (currently amended) The pallet assembly of claim 1 [[4]], further comprising removable brace insert members for securing objects on said plastic deck member, wherein said depending lug members comprise an open interior and a brace insert receiving opening, such that said brace insert members can be secured in said open interior of said depending lug members.

14. (original) The pallet assembly of claim 13, wherein said brace insert members comprise detent members which mechanically interlock with said depending lug members of said plastic deck member.

15. (currently amended) A pallet assembly comprising a metal base member and a removable plastic deck member joined to said metal base member by integral mating interlocking means, wherein said metal base member further comprises a generally flat upper surface and wherein said mating interlocking means comprises apertures disposed in said upper surface of said metal base member and depending lug members on said plastic deck member which extend through said apertures in said metal base member upper surface; and

wherein said depending lug members each comprise at least one detent member, wherein the width of said depending lug members in a direction containing said at least one detent member is greater than the corresponding width of said apertures in said upper surface of said metal base member in such direction

16. (original) The pallet assembly of claim 15, wherein said metal base member upper surface comprises a plurality of spaced structural members.

17. (original) The pallet assembly of claim 16, wherein said spaced structural members comprise rods joined to define a grid.

18. (original) The pallet assembly of claim 17, wherein said spaced structural members further comprise flat bars, wherein said rods are disposed parallel to each other and said flat bars are disposed parallel to each other, with said rods disposed perpendicularly to said flat bars.

19. (canceled)

20. (original) The pallet assembly of claim 15, wherein said metal base member comprises at least four depending leg members located directly below at least four of said apertures in said upper surface of said metal base member, and wherein said depending lug members corresponding to said at least four of said apertures each comprise an open interior and a leg receiving opening, such that the pallet assembly is nestable when vertically stacked with another such pallet assembly.

21. (currently amended) The pallet assembly of claim 18, wherein said flat bars adjacent said apertures are provided with slots to receive said at least one detent member ~~shoulders~~ of said depending lug ~~detent~~ members.

22. (original) The pallet assembly of claim 15, wherein said plastic deck member comprises a generally flat load receiving surface.

23. (original) The pallet assembly of claim 15, wherein said plastic deck member comprises a product receiving cavity.

24. (original) The pallet assembly of claim 15, further comprising removable brace insert members for securing objects on said plastic deck member, wherein said depending lug members comprise an open interior and a brace insert receiving opening, such that said brace insert members can be secured in said open interior of said depending lug members.

25. (original) The pallet assembly of claim 24, wherein said brace insert members comprise detent members which mechanically interlock with said depending lug members of said plastic deck member.

26. (original) A pallet assembly comprising a metal base member and a removable plastic deck member joined to said metal base member by integral mating interlocking means, wherein said metal base member further comprises a generally flat upper surface and wherein said mating interlocking means comprises apertures disposed in said upper surface of said metal base member and depending lug members on said plastic deck member which extend through said apertures in said metal base member upper surface, wherein said metal base member upper surface comprises a plurality of spaced structural members, wherein said depending lug members each comprise at least one detent member, wherein the width of said depending lug members in a direction containing said at least one detent member is greater than the corresponding width of said apertures in said upper surface of said metal base member in such direction.

27. (original) The pallet assembly of claim 26, wherein said spaced structural members comprise rods joined to define a grid.

28. (original) The pallet assembly of claim 27, wherein said spaced structural members further comprise flat bars, wherein said rods are disposed parallel to each other and said flat bars are disposed parallel to each other, with said rods disposed perpendicularly to said flat bars.

29. (original) The pallet assembly of claim 26, wherein said metal base member comprises at least four depending leg members located directly below at least four of said apertures in said upper surface of said metal base member, and wherein said depending lug members corresponding to said at least four of said apertures each comprise an open interior and a leg receiving opening, such that the pallet assembly is nestable when vertically stacked with another such pallet assembly.

30. (original) The pallet assembly of claim 26, wherein said plastic deck member comprises a generally flat load receiving surface.

31. (original) The pallet assembly of claim 26, wherein said plastic deck member comprises a product receiving cavity.

32. (original) The pallet assembly of claim 26, further comprising removable brace insert members for securing objects on said plastic deck member, wherein said depending lug members comprise an open interior and a brace insert receiving opening, such that said brace insert members can be secured in said open interior of said depending lug members.

33. (original) The pallet assembly of claim 32, wherein said brace insert members comprise detent members which mechanically interlock with said depending lug members of said plastic deck member.